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July 12, 2011

The Honorable Hilary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

I am writing to express my serious concern regarding a photography contest the U.S. Interests Section (USINT) in Havana, Cuba is carrying out which undermines, and potentially violates, U.S. law.

According to USINT's website, the Public Affairs Office of the United States Interests Section initiated a "Memories of Summer" photography contest on June 13, 2011 which calls on Cubans to submit their "best summer-themed photos to compete for a chance to win big prizes." USINT also promises to pay for the cost of printing and framing the fifteen images selected as finalists for the exhibition at USINT in September 2011.

Not surprisingly, the photos that have been posted to USINT's official Facebook page as submissions to this contest offer the quintessential depiction of tourism travel to Cuba – beaches, smiles and bikinis. It is appalling that USINT would allow itself to become a tool of the regime's propaganda machine by legitimizing this skewed perception of the Cuban people's reality. More importantly, it is unacceptable that USINT would expend U.S. taxpayer dollars on an activity which promotes tourism travel to Cuba, an activity which is strictly prohibited by current U.S. law.

Madam Secretary, I respectfully request your immediate attention to this matter and thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN
Chairman